



## Galveston Neighborhood Gets High Marks in Hurricane Test

### Full Mitigation Best Practice Story

#### *Galveston County, Texas*

**Galveston Island, TX** - Hurricane Ike may have devastated most of Galveston, but one of the city's newest neighborhoods – Evia – suffered only minor wind damage and developers say it is thanks to features in the town's design.



Crystal Ruiz, who runs the neighborhood coffee shop, was filled with apprehension when she came back on the island a couple of weeks after the September 2008 storm. "When you drive into Galveston, you are hit by what happened here," she said from the counter of the Sugar Bean Coffee and Cream. She said everything was damaged and described the scene with people dragging their belongings out of ruined homes.

"You drive past that big mountain of trash; you don't know what you will find. You get to Evia, and it is beautiful! A couple of street signs were down. Some siding was missing. But the sun was shining, the grass was green, the lakes were sparkling, and the homes - even the little details like the gardens were spotless. It was fantastic!" said Ms. Ruiz.

It is no accident that the subdivision survived the storm so well. It was carefully planned to offer gracious living and classic design with structural integrity and sustainability.

The first new neighborhood in the city in three decades, Evia is named for Jose Antonio de Evia, an 18th Century Spaniard credited with discovering the island and naming it "Galveston" after his patron, Bernardo de Galvez.

Evia is what planners call a New Urbanist community. It's a traditional, mixed-use neighborhood that echoes the past. Curving streets encourage neighbors to visit and walk or bike around. Pastel houses in Victorian, Craftsman, and classical designs are scattered across the landscape. All houses feature generous front porches; garages and cars are relegated to the rear. The 361-lot, 93-acre subdivision is also a green, sustainable community, designed to protect the environment and to minimize disaster losses that are ultimately huge, wasteful burdens for the environment.

What helped the Evia neighborhood survive Hurricane Ike?

- **Location:** It's in the island's interior and behind Galveston's protective seawall, which helped reduce the storm's power and surge from the Gulf of Mexico.
- **Elevation:** The development was elevated to 11 feet above sea level, making it one of the highest spots on the barrier island. Developers dug out three lakes, mounded the fill on the land, and then carved in streets. The result is a gently rolling terrain. Builders then raised building pads higher, to at least 13 feet, as required by the city.
- **Land design:** The recessed roads, lakes, and a 5-acre man-made wetland served as a secondary water-detention system that helped ameliorate flooding. These design features also provide an aesthetic benefit, too; viewed from front porches, streets seem to disappear, giving the neighborhood a pastoral charm.
- **Building design:** Evia is the first Texas project to use the tie-down system from Florida's Dade County, which calls for metal clips, cable tie-downs, and fortified wind construction.
- **Storm planning, preparation, and recovery:** Residents removed anything that could become flying debris, such as lawn chairs, trash cans, and flower pots. Cleanup began immediately before evacuated residents returned.

#### Activity/Project Location

Geographical Area: **Single County in a State**

FEMA Region: **Region VI**

State: **Texas**

County: **Galveston County**

City/Community: **Galveston**

#### Key Activity/Project Information

Sector: **Private**

Hazard Type: **Hurricane/Tropical Storm**

Activity/Project Type: **Floodplain Management**

Activity/Project Start Date: **01/2000**

Activity/Project End Date: **Ongoing**

Funding Source: **Private funds**

#### Activity/Project Economic Analysis

Cost: **Amount Not Available**

Non FEMA Cost: **0**

#### Activity/Project Disaster Information

Mitigation Resulted From Federal  
Disaster? **No**

Value Tested By Disaster? **Yes**

Tested By Federal Disaster #: **1791 , 09/13/2008**

Repetitive Loss Property? **No**

#### Reference URLs

No URLs were submitted

#### Main Points

No Main Points were entered.



Hurricane Ike left little damage in Galveston's new Evia neighborhood because of its design and building systems.



Ike took down some streets signs but not much more